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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 000678

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UK
SUBJECT: US SPECIAL ENVOY TO OIC MEETS WITH SAUDI FM

Classified By: Ambassador Ford Fraker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On April 26 Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Sada Cumber and the Ambassador met with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al Faisal. Special Envoy Cumber shared with Prince Saud the U.S. role in the OIC and discussed Saudi recognition of Kosovo. The Prince was receptive to the U.S.,s increased role in the OIC, deeming it a positive step. Regarding Kosovo, Prince Saud repeated the earlier SAG position of maintaining a wait and see attitude, although he hinted that Saudi recognition may come in the near future. End summary.

Welcoming a U.S. Role in OIC

¶2. (SBU) Special Envoy Cumber began by exchanging views with Prince Saud on the Dakar Summit, both agreeing it went well. S/E Cumber outlined his mandate from President Bush, whereby he was tasked to a) work with the OIC; b) work with the global Muslim community at large; and c) work with the Muslim community within the U.S. itself. He described the Memorandum of Understanding he was working to sign with OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu outlining the three

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areas on which the United States would focus -- science and technology, enhancing the status of women, and education. S/E Cumber described his plan of inviting SG Ihsanoglu to the White House and the Department.

¶3. (C) The Prince welcomed that the USG had established a representational position in the OIC. He noted the need to ensure that extremists do not hijack the Islamic agenda. He added that U.S.-Muslim relations in the United States was a model to be copied where there is a large Muslim population in a western country, while lamenting that the UK had such poor relations with its own Muslim population. Prince Saud was receptive to the MOU and the White House-Muslim Summit, agreeing to support these measures. He opined that the USG,s representation in the OIC would present its own challenges, with other nations seeking to copy it. He commended the U.S. performance to date in the OIC, comparing it to Russia's near-invisible presence in its OIC Observer role.

Kosovo Recognition - Eventually

¶4. (C) Turning to Kosovo, Prince Saud,s response was the same as he had told us before - the SAG wanted this to be a European issue, not a Muslim one. Thus the SAG did not want to be in the first tranche of nations to recognize Kosovo.

Likewise, they wanted to see more European unity on this issue, which he acknowledged as now having made progress, stating recognition could come "in the next few weeks." He confessed that the Russians have pressured the SAG heavily to not recognize Kosovo. Prince Saud advised that the SAG had assured the Russians and that if, and when, the Saudis did recognize Kosovo, it would be to go with the general international consensus and not to spite Russia per se. Prince Saud added that both the SAG and Russia shared concerns over regions unilaterally declaring independence based solely on ethnic or religious grounds - citing Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine as examples.

15. (C) Prince Saud continued that he did not want Kosovo to become a weak state and assured that Saudi funds would be provided to support it. He remarked he preferred this issue to be worked out by consensus. Prince Saud did state that Saudi recognition would occur in the near future, but declined to give a specific time frame. He did concur for S/E Cumber to mention this Saudi position on Kosovo in his upcoming discussions with the leaders of Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait and Pakistan.

Comment

16. (C) Prince Saud was affable and animated in this meeting. His support of the U.S.'s role in the OIC, particularly the Special Envoy's role, appears genuine. We had requested for S/E Cumber to meet during this trip with Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, that was unfortunately not granted. We interpret this to indicate that while the Saudis have warmed to our involvement in the OIC, they have not yet decided to fully embrace it. On Kosovo, Prince Saud did not tell us anything new, although his comment that the SAG may recognize

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Kosovo in the near term indicates that the SAG may do so eventually
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